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DE RUEHDL #0275 0741452

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6638

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY

RUCNOSC/OSCE POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY 0088

RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY 0035

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0067

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0205

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 000275

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2015

TAGS: PREL KDEM PGOV EUN BO EI

SUBJECT: BELARUS: IRELAND SUPPORTS U.S.-EU COORDINATION,  
BUT CAUTIONS ON FINANCIAL SANCTIONS

REF: STATE 38953

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Jonathan Benton; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) Ireland agrees strongly with U.S. points on the continuing importance of U.S.-EU coordination in the run-up to, and aftermath of, the March 19 presidential election in Belarus, according to Ruadhri Dowling, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) First Secretary for Russia and Eastern Europe, to whom emboff delivered reftel demarche on March 14.

Dowling cited EU statements highlighting the international community's serious concerns about the Belarus government's conduct in the pre-election period. He pointed out that Ireland had earlier assigned one longer-term observer, a university lecturer, to the ODIHR monitoring mission and would send ten more observers for the election, including a DFA official.

¶2. (C) In terms of possible U.S.-EU post-electoral responses to the Belarusian Government's misconduct, Dowling noted Irish support for the expansion of visa restrictions, an option already under EU consideration. He cautioned, however, that financial sanctions, such as freezing the personal assets of Belarusian officials, would be more problematic. He elaborated that such sanctions could not be implemented quickly and, perhaps worse, might not be effective. The unintended result, he added, would be to diminish U.S. and EU prestige within Belarus. Dowling concluded that the EU would nevertheless continue to examine this option in coordination with the USG.

BENTON